

TO: PUBLIC DEFENDER COMMISSION

EXHIBIT 1

FROM: CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER RANDI HOOD

As you all know, I am currently in a deliberate homicide trial. This is the case I was assigned prior to me taking my current position. I have had no success in getting the Court to accommodate the commission meeting so I wanted to give you an update.

The statewide public defender system has had nothing more than the usual problems. Increasing caseloads and decreasing numbers of contract attorneys continue to be a problem in Kalispell. In the past few weeks, two new attorneys have started as well as two additional staff persons. This will definitely help but I believe we will have to hire at least two more attorneys by summer. We also added another staff person to Polson which meets their current needs.

I have just received word that we have lost an attorney in the Hamilton office. He has gone over to the county attorney's office for more pay. Perhaps this is good anecdotal proof that we are not paying attorneys more than the prosecutors. We will start the replacement process immediately for this position.

The Billings public defender office continues to have attorney openings. One attorney has left and gone to the county attorney's office. We have a new attorney starting by the end of the month. This is someone that Kris Copenhaver, the regional deputy public defender, very much wanted to come on board. She has also continued to look for the right people to fill out that office.

All other offices and regions are in good shape. We have learned that contract attorneys come and go perhaps more than we anticipated. So far, we have been able to keep the numbers fairly stable.

We continue with union negotiations. The labor-management committee has had its first meeting and all reports are that it is a good tool for voicing concerns and sharing information. I hope to be able to participate in the next meeting.

Most of the past month has been spent in getting ready for the legislature. Special kudos need to be given to Harry Freebourn who has worked tirelessly on the legislative issues, budget and legislation. His legislative experience has proved invaluable. A number of other people have stepped up to appear on our legislative bills in my absence. Commissioner Dan Donovan, Ed Sheehy, Harry Freebourn, and Beth Brenneman have stepped up to testify on various bills.

I look forward to seeing some of you Thursday evening and I certainly will be ready to do the budget hearing on Saturday.